



SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FORUM

April, 2019
Summary report

This report summarizes the views, opinions and recommendations of the participants of “Conference on Social Entrepreneurship”, organized by the “Association of Social Enterprises of Armenia” NGO in the framework of the “Social Entrepreneurship as a Community Development Mechanism” small sub-grant project funded in the scope of the EU-funded “Commitment to Constructive Dialogue” project, with co-funding of the “EcoLab” Foundation for Sustainable Development and Active Citizenship and with the support of Entrepreneurship Development Centre of YSU. The Conference was held on 26 April 2019, in the Yerevan State University.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

Social Entrepreneurship ecosystem in Armenia

- In Armenia social entrepreneurship development is currently in focus of number of international donor organizations and local non-governmental organizations. There are a lot of donor programs that aimed to develop social enterprises and sectoral ecosystem.
- Currently, there are a number of successful SEs that can serve as an example and as a model be extrapolated in other regions in Armenia as well, contributing sustainable development in the regions.
- According to implemented researches, SE support mechanisms are sufficient for the implementation of incubation phase: there are grants that tend to develop business plans, start-up activities with the SE contexts. Nevertheless, SE development support mechanisms are still insufficient.

Problems and gaps

- Armenia's integration process in the international SE sphere is still insufficient. SE cooperation networks are still not sufficiently developed and sustainable.
- Donor support for social entrepreneurship development is mainly provided in the pre-primary and primary stages of the establishment of enterprises. Established enterprises fail in the subsequent stages of business due to the lack of marketing, business development knowledge and skills.
- The cooperation and mutual assistance between SE sphere and LSGB are still insufficient due to a low awareness of LSGBs in SE sphere and avoidance approach of innovative solutions to social issues within the framework of LSGB activities.
- SE sectoral orientation is still narrow and is limited to several sectoral fields.
- At the regional level population mobilization of SE ideas remains as a priority issue. The lack of initiative and skepticism of possible changes still remains problematic at the personal level among population.
- In SE sphere research works are still in a low level, there is a lack of sectoral researches.

Development Directions

- Develop the cooperation between SE sphere and LSGBs by raising the LSGBs awareness of SE sphere on one hand, and on the other hand creating active initiative groups of people in the regions.
- Create such SE networks and platforms that will make possible the sharing of experience and mutual assistance among different social enterprises.
- International donor support not only direct to the incubation phase of SE, but also to the acceleration phase, also providing support during SE development phases.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONCEPT

In scope of "Social entrepreneurship" concept

- SE is a combination of two directions: social impact and entrepreneurial activity.
- SE main profit should be gained from entrepreneurial activity, thus it should be separated from public activity.
- SE main problem is the solution of social issues in the society, regions and in the country.
- SE establishment aim is to carry out a mission and not the gaining of excess profit.
- It's important to differentiate businesses with corporative social liability from SEs.
- SE is not only the problem of economic sphere, but also has a function of bringing cultural, mentally, change of value base, people to social solidarity, and social justice values.
- Implementing of SE objectives directly or indirectly leads to the increase of women's involvement, decrease the poverty and solution of many other problems.

Social Entrepreneurship includes

- Public solidarity model, combining competitive market and public interest.
- Establishment of inclusive environment for those isolated from the society.
- "Good governance" concept
- A new entrepreneurial culture encouraging integrity.

Problems and gaps

- RA Government still does not consider SE as a part of economy, which affects to the solution of social issues.
- In SE sphere does not exist systematic policy, SE are not yet defined by the Government and statistical data is not collected in the field.
- Separate representatives of the Government are still skeptical about the Social Enterprises model, considering it as a sphere that always depends on state resources.

Development Directions

- SE incentive system should exclude its possible exploitation by traditional businesses.
- In the SE concept as a main part of social enterprises is defined "green mindset", focusing on the solution of ecological and environmental issues in the regions by avoiding the definition of the "only social problem solving organization".
- In the Social Entrepreneurship-Government dialogue to change the Government perception of SE making the Government supportive and social issues solutions sphere from the "dependable on the state support" sphere perception.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN FORMAL AND NON FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Educational component of social entrepreneurship development

- In SE concept it's essential the dissemination of SE education as a main mechanism for the sphere development.
- In the scope of the "Commitment to Constructive Dialogue" sub-grant program financed by EU and managed by Armenian Lawyers' Association, Armenian Business Coalition implemented 1) Assessment of the effectiveness of establishment of "Entrepreneurial Education" training 2) Study the possibilities for the establishment of SE education.
- In the scope of the "Commitment to Constructive Dialogue" sub-grant program Armenian Business Coalition carries out activities for the development and establishment of SE educational model.
- In the scope of SE educational component a lot of Armenian language manuals and guides are developed.
- There are many formal and non formal educational programs about SE that play an essential role among beneficiaries.

Problems and gaps

- Though a lot of works are done for the establishment of Armenian guides, but there is still a lack of Armenian language tools and manuals.
- Awareness and educational level of SE sphere among government officials, journalists and other sphere representatives is still low.
- Efforts to develop SE sphere in educational sector are not yet coordinated and there is a need for systemic changes.

Development Directions

- Within the framework of university formal education increase the students opportunities for internships in acting SEs.
- By SE education dissemination promote regional development and mobilize regional passive population with the successful examples, including them in the processes as a core and equal actors.
- With the formal and non formal educational programs develop innovation and creative thinking among students as a precondition of SE sphere development.
- Consider the multilayer of SE education including two layers of ecosystem: regional and state. SE education make closer to regions by creating beneficiaries coordination platform that will promote SE development.